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ABSTRACT

A study of thirteen exemplary compensatory education projects in Elementary Education (nine in reading, four in mathematics) in the State of New York is described in this report. The study, which was designed to investigate and describe specific educational practices so that they could be replicated in other schools, found ten major factors which contribute to exemplary pupil achievement: (1) professional competence among instructional personnel; (2) professional competence among administrators; (3) open communication and rapport among project personnel; (4) faculty involvement in shaping projects; (5) faculty confidence in self and in pupils; (6) faculty awareness of instructional goals; (7) availability and variety of instructional materials; (8) eclectic approach to activities and materials; (9) close involvement of teachers and para-professionals with pupils; (10) flexibility of teaching techniques in response to pupil needs. The primary means of identifying exemplary projects consisted of analyzing the results of standardized achievement tests. The methodology used in collecting data involved interviewing 145 staff members of the selected programs. Comparisons are made between this study (1976) and a national study on compensatory education (1972). (WI)

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PROJECT IDEAS

Noteworthy Practices
Found in New York State's
Locally Devised Compensatory Education
Projects

June 1978

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Albany, New York 12234

UD018921

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PROJECT IDEAS

Noteworthy Practices Found in New York State's Locally Devised Compensatory Education Projects

June 1978

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CHAPTER I - SUMMARY

This report is based on a study of exemplary compensatory projects. The focus of the study was on the educational practices of 13 compensatory elementary reading and mathematics projects which had achieved notable success. The study was designed to investigate and describe specific educational practices of the exemplary projects so that such practices could be replicated in other schools.

To carry out such a study, nominations of 27 compensatory projects which had appeared to be exemplary were received. Of these, 13 were determined, upon application of stringent criteria (including standardized achievement test data), to have been exemplary.

Of the 13 projects selected for the study, 9 were in reading and 4 were in mathematics.

GENERAL FINDINGS

The findings of the study of compensatory elementary reading and mathematics projects suggest that the following factors contribute to exemplary pupil achievement:

1. professional competence among administrators;
2. professional competence among instructional personnel;
3. open communication and rapport among project personnel;
4. faculty involvement in shaping projects;
5. faculty confidence in self and in pupils;

6. faculty awareness of instructional goals;
7. availability and variety of instructional materials;
8. eclectic approach to activities and materials;
9. close involvement of teachers and paraprofessionals with pupils;
10. flexibility of teaching techniques in response to individual pupil needs.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Interviews with project personnel at the sites were conducted through the use of structured interview forms. Information collected was analyzed with certain patterns emerging, as discussed in the following sections.

Administration

A substudy of administrative patterns in five of the exemplary projects revealed a high degree of consistency among the projects. Administrators of exemplary projects were found to possess substantial knowledge of the content areas of their projects. They were able, effective organizers of their personnel; they played strong roles in determining the direction of their projects; and they maintained excellent cooperative relationships with their staffs, featuring marked absence of

personality conflicts. The administrators made considerable efforts to insure the competence of their teaching personnel, hiring carefully, displaying no reluctance to fire where incompetence surfaced, and providing inservice training to supplement and improve their faculties' teaching skills.

Personnel

Project teachers and paraprofessionals directly involved with pupils generally had previous experience in education, more than met minimum certification requirements and frequently were actively engaged in further professional training. They tended to remain with the projects for long periods of time, thus assuring project stability and continuity. The attitudes of project personnel were positive, both toward themselves and toward their pupils. The personnel considered their roles important and felt themselves to be competent. They were confident that their pupils could learn and improve, and expected them at least to finish high school. They felt their school administrators to be responsive to their needs. They manifested a thorough involvement with their projects and a close involvement with their pupils, as indicated by the dominance of small group instruction as an educational practice. Personnel believed that project success depended on staff rapport and competence. Principals as well as teaching personnel typically expressed satisfaction with their school buildings, instructional materials, and staff members.

Reading

Personnel in the nine exemplary reading projects shared as major goals the development of their pupils' reading comprehension abilities, the improvement of pupils' attitudes toward reading, and the strengthening of pupils' self-concepts. No single instructional approach was dominant; most teachers employed an eclectic method. Their teaching activities stressed decoding, comprehension, and the development of work-study and silent reading skills. Most frequently used instructional materials were comprehension materials, phonics materials, and materials made by the teachers themselves. To evaluate pupils, most project faculty used discussions with pupils and observation of oral reading. The reading staff perceived their projects as highly successful at achieving the stated goals.

Mathematics

Personnel in the four exemplary mathematics projects indicated that they placed a strong emphasis on helping pupils develop positive attitudes toward mathematics. Mathematics teachers used a wide variety of materials, with teacher-made materials enjoying greater use than commercially produced materials. The kinds of teacher-made materials most frequently used were games, puzzles, charts, and graphs. Commercially available materials most often used were manipulatives, texts, kits, and programmed instructional materials. The most common instructional patterns were small formal groups and individualized instruction. Thus, it was feasible for teachers to make extensive use of oral discussion, both as an instructional procedure and as an ongoing feedback of pupil progress. Traditional evaluation methods of pupil observation and teacher-made and standardized tests were also em-

ployed. The most heavily used motivational techniques were positive reinforcement (in the forms of verbal praise and written comments) and instruction geared toward high pupil success. Instructional activities principally involved carefully designed nonmonotonous drill and work on motor activities. At all levels (grade 2-6), teachers stressed such fundamental arithmetic skills as numeration concepts, number facts, and addition, subtraction, and multiplication of whole numbers. Also receiving emphasis were application problems involving whole numbers and measurement. Other mathematics topics, such as plane and geometric figures, assumed increasing importance at the higher grade levels.

Comparative Study

Since certain questions were analogous to items used in a large nationwide study of compensatory reading projects, comparisons were possible. Comparison of the sample project reading teachers with the reading teachers in the national study revealed that the New York exemplary project teachers use a more eclectic teaching approach, employ decoding and work-study skills to a greater extent and appear to have a more specific set of project goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School administrators and program coordinators who seek to improve the success of compensatory reading and mathematics programs should examine their existing programs with regard to each of the ten exemplary factors itemized in the general findings above. In addition to these factors, three other salient characteristics were common to all exemplary projects surveyed: (a) effective use of paraprofessionals or aides (aide/teacher ratio often exceeded 1:1); (b) continual (daily) formative evaluation incorporated into instructional activities to monitor pupil progress thereby reinforcing pupil success positively; (c) summative project evaluation by pre- and posttesting within the same school year with appropriate standardized instruments.

CHAPTER II - INTRODUCTION

The present study of exemplary compensatory projects in New York State used results of achievement testing as the principal means of identifying exemplary projects. Projects identified as exemplary on the basis of product data were also required to meet criteria of educational effectiveness, reasonable cost, replicability and continuity, stability of the tested pupil population, and the reliability and validity of evaluation instruments. Additionally, onsite visits and observations permitted further confirmation of the exemplary status of projects. Investigation of educational practices within the projects was not begun until all these criteria had been met.

The purpose of the study was to examine specific compensatory reading and mathematics projects which have demonstrated substantial and statistically significant gains in the amount of achievement growth of their pupils. The systematic analysis of such projects was designed to identify educationally significant practices which could be replicated.

The findings are based on data collected from 13 school districts; 2 in New York City, 4 on Long Island, and 7 in Upstate New York. Of the 13 projects, 9 are in reading and 4 are in mathematics. All the projects involve elementary school pupils, with second grade the lowest and sixth the highest grade served.

CHAPTER III - FACTORS AFFECTING PROJECTS

This section presents descriptive characteristics of the 13 projects as compiled from the responses of project personnel. Also included are results of a substudy of administrative patterns in a sample of five of the exemplary projects.

EXPERIENCE OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

Eighty-two teachers and 63 paraprofessionals were interviewed in the 13 projects. Of the total of 145 staff members, 97 persons (67 percent) had received undergraduate training and 82 persons (57 percent) graduate training.[1/] This finding suggests that at least some of the project paraprofessionals had undergraduate schooling. Of those who had received the undergraduate training, 34 percent had taken courses within the last five years, while of those with graduate training, 81 percent had taken courses within the last five years.[2/] This finding reflects the recency of specialized graduate training.

More than a simple majority of the teaching and paraprofessional personnel of the exemplary projects had also received additional special training, namely: on-the-job training, 77 percent; inservice training sessions, 71 percent; graduate courses, 44 percent; undergraduate courses, 32 percent; other, 17 percent. The experience of exemplary project instructional personnel averaged eight years in general and three years with the project under study.

1/These are not additive, since the categories are not mutually exclusive.
2/It is estimated that, statewide, approximately 65 percent of the elementary teachers have had graduate training, for the school year 1975-76.

ATTITUDES OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

A number of interview items were designed to explore attitudes and perceptions of project personnel concerning their projects' success, their pupils, their schools, their administrators, and their teaching practices.

Factors Contributing to Project Success

Principals, teachers and paraprofessionals were questioned about the critical factors contributing to the success of the projects. The factors most often viewed as critical were those concerned with the attitude and competence of the instructional staff. Specifically, the attitude of the staff seemed particularly high in terms of rapport and staff harmony in general as well as in terms of relationships within the specific project.

Staff competence has long been known as a factor contributing to classroom success but such specific facets of that factor have not always been detailed, namely, knowledge of and the generally appropriate use of instructional techniques for various learners accompanied by access to a variety of materials for

such learners. Items which respondents felt as having a significant impact on their project outcomes and items which many schools can control include appropriate inservice training and relatively low pupil-teacher ratios. The latter will be discussed in more detail at a later point but in this broad use the low ratio simply means less than ten students per teacher at one time.

Attitudes Toward Project Participants

Teachers and paraprofessionals believed that: improving the self-image of their pupils is important (96 percent), project pupils have more trouble learning to read than average children (82 percent), and learning to verbalize complete thoughts is important for such pupils (81 percent). Conversely they did not believe that: their students do not want to learn (90 percent), their students will never do as well as other children (77 percent), or that their students will always score lower than other children regardless of instructional quality (76 percent).

The predominantly positive attitudes toward the potential of exemplary project pupils expressed by project personnel received confirmatory support from another series of items. In these the teachers and paraprofessionals were asked to indicate how much schooling they expected their average project pupil to attain. Of 139 who responded, the highest percentage (69 percent) indicated that they expected their average student to complete high school. Of the remaining 31 about 15 percent each believed that: (1) their average student would continue beyond high school and (2) their average student would not even complete high school.

Attitudes Toward Project Schools

Teachers and paraprofessionals were questioned about selected general and specific aspects of their schools. Responses to six items concerning general school aspects ranged from about 80 to 90 percent satisfaction. For example, respondents indicated that they were satisfied with: their school faculty, the attitudes of their schools' pupil population, the curriculum and overall philosophy of education, and the physical facilities (i.e., buildings and classrooms).

Regarding items on specific school characteristics, all 13 aspects of their schools were generally believed to be adequate. Those at the top of the list were: the suitability and quantity of books and materials for instruction, the size of the school in relation to pupil population, and the suitability of the school for program operation (all over 90 percent).

Project school principals also responded to a series of items closely analogous to those discussed above. Over 80 percent reported their schools to be adequate in most areas but the highest agreement (over 90 percent) was in regard to: suitability of books; quantity, suitability of quality of instructional equipment (exclusive of audiovisual equipment); and size of building.

Attitudes Toward Administration

When teachers discussed the school's administration in terms of responsiveness to certain requests (e.g., for additional teaching materials or equipment), 82 to 91 percent indicated that such administration was responsive. Less than five percent indicated an unresponsive administration.

Attitudes Toward Teaching Practices

In a discussion about the extent of their agreement with the existing teaching practices utilized in projects over 90 percent of the teachers and paraprofessionals agreed that: a wrong response could be as useful as a correct response in the teaching of basic skills, and materials are less important than methods in teaching the basic skills.

EDUCATION PRACTICES

Participation

Project teachers and paraprofessionals discussed a series of 14 items designed to determine the scope of their participation in and influence on projects. Responses indicated that instructional personnel believed that they had: received professional treatment from fellow teachers, principals, and administrative staff (90 percent); received positive feedback about their work from principals and administrators (77 percent); participated in keeping written records of pupils' progress in relation to teaching objectives (89 percent); maintained charts related to the required skills acquisition of individual pupils (82 percent). Additionally, over two thirds indicated that they had created curriculum materials for their projects and felt they had provided meaningful input into decisions concerning their projects.

Instructional Grouping

When teachers and paraprofessionals in exemplary projects described the frequency with which certain instructional groupings operated among the pupils they taught, most reported that small groups (between two and five pupils), individualized instruction and pupils working independently were the commonly occurring instructional groupings. In contrast, the least commonly occurring instructional groupings were those of more than ten pupils, independent pupil teams, and groups of between six and ten pupils.

Across all projects, an instructional team (frequently one teacher and one or two paraprofessionals) served an average of 57 pupils per project, usually in small-group or individual instruction. Nearly 50 percent of the pupils had received prior compensatory instruction in reading or mathematics.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUBSTUDY

A small study was designed to identify key administrative processes. A subset of five exemplary projects was selected based on geographical diversity, mixture of urban and rural characteristics, and project size.

A specialist in school administration interviewed key project administrators using a structured interview form. The interview data provided the basis for judgements on 39 separate variables for each project.[1/] Analysis of these variables yielded nine organizational patterns characteristic of the administration of the sampled exemplary projects. Given the limitations of this study, it is only possible to hypothesize that these administrative elements are closely associated with successful projects.

1/A detailed presentation of the ratings for each project is on file with the Bureau of School and Categorical Programs Evaluation.

Patterns

1. Key personnel in the projects operate from second level administrative positions at the central office level. Their titles vary from assistant superintendent to reading/mathematics coordinator to Title I supervisor. They are well trained in the content areas and possess excellent administrative abilities.

On the other hand, school principals generally are not as heavily involved in originating, operating, or evaluating projects. They have responsibility for some of the day-to-day operations, and they support the projects because central office personnel place high priorities on the projects.

2. Decision making and control are based in the central office. Para-professionals, teachers, and principals are consulted for ideas and reactions, but the general directions the programs take are usually determined at the central office level.

3. Exemplary projects in this subsample are tied into sophisticated planning systems at the central office level. Care is taken to avoid overlap of programs, confusion of roles, and other causes of ambiguity. The projects have excellent articulation and integration with regular school programs, or are moving in this direction.

4. Great emphasis is placed on a rational and comprehensive hiring system. In these districts, it was reported that project personnel were chosen after good job descriptions were written, the positions were advertised widely, and applicants were interviewed by a number of individuals in the districts. All projects have been characterized by staff continuity at the paraprofessional and teacher level. When vacancies do occur, search procedures were characterized by the same careful methods by which initial personnel were selected.

5. When dismissal or transfer is required, top level district personnel act quickly. Misplaced individuals are not kept with the projects.

6. Extensive preservice and inservice programs have been developed for project personnel. These programs generally include preservice workshops, regular workshop activity, visitations, and individual meetings with consultants and supervisors.

7. Recordkeeping at both the school and central office level is an important aspect of all programs. Project personnel have ready access to test scores and other pertinent pupil information.

8. Parents and other citizens are involved in the projects through advisory committees, either at the school or district level. These committees operate mainly as recipients of information about the projects and as sounding boards for district personnel. In general, they are not involved in decision making, although they may be the source of ideas which are eventually adopted.

9. The projects are characterized by an open climate among personnel and a lack of personality conflict. Projects exhibit a variety of administrative styles and decision processes, including one characterized as highly autocratic, yet there is a marked absence of tension about interpersonal relationships among project personnel.

CHAPTER IV: CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED BASIC SKILLS PROJECTS

In addition to the general project characteristics described elsewhere specific information was obtained from project teachers and paraprofessionals in each of the basic skills areas of reading and mathematics. Intensive structured interviews were conducted by specialists in each of the subject areas.

A team of reading specialists visited the nine reading projects identified as exemplary and interviewed project personnel concerning project goals, instructional approaches and activities, instructional materials, methods of evaluation and their perceptions of success in achieving project goals. Similarly, a team of mathematics specialists visited four exemplary compensatory mathematics projects.

The results of these interviews are described in the following sections. Only the most salient findings have been extracted from the data and are presented directly in narrative form.

FINDINGS IN READING PROJECTS

The results of interviews with personnel in exemplary reading projects are presented below.

Project Goals

Teachers and paraprofessionals were questioned about the degree of importance of specific project goals. Comprehension, attitude toward reading, and pupils' self-concept were most often stated as major goals. More than 75 percent of all respondents specified these three as major goals.

Decoding skills, reading silently, and discrimination skills were stated as important major or secondary goals by nearly half the respondents. In contrast, approximately 85 percent of the respondents did not feel that perceptual-motor development was of major importance. However, this finding is not surprising since most projects did not operate in the early primary grades where such skill development is most emphasized.

Instructional Approaches and Activities

Flexibility and variety were identified as basic elements in the instructional approaches taken by project teachers and paraprofessionals. In almost all cases, respondents indicated use of an eclectic instructional approach in their classrooms. In keeping with their instructional methods, teachers and paraprofessionals specified extensive use of a variety of instructional activities.

Those activities most frequently engaged in at the project classroom level centered around decoding and comprehension. More than 80 percent of the respondents reported the frequent and extensive use of these activities. Activities designed to develop work-study skills and silent reading skills were used often or extensively by more than 65 percent of the sample. Activities stressing the development of perceptual-motor skills and discrimination skills were used much less often. Specifically, about one-third of the respondents indicated perceptual-motor activities were rarely or never used. Discrimination activities were used infrequently. These findings are congruent with the stated project goals.

Instructional Materials

Teachers and paraprofessionals were asked to indicate the extent of their use of various instructional materials. Phonics materials, teacher-made materials, and comprehension materials were used most frequently in the exemplary reading projects. Basal readers were used rarely or not at all in almost 75 percent of the projects, although such materials were extensively available as part of each districts overall reading program. Linguistic materials and language experience materials received little use when compared with the other materials.

Evaluation Procedures

Types of formative evaluation procedures used in project classrooms included observation of oral reading and paper and pencil (teacher-made) tests. Standardized tests were used for summative evaluation in all projects, a factor considered essential as a selection criterion for exemplary projects.

Perceptions of Success

Project teachers and paraprofessionals felt that they were highly successful in achieving their project goals. The respondents generally felt that as a group they were very successful in developing reading ability in all goal areas.

More than 80 percent of the respondents reported that they were very successful in improving their pupils' self-concept; most indicated similar perceptions of success in regard to their pupils' attitude toward reading. Considerable success was perceived in the areas of decoding and comprehension. A predictable exception was in the area of improvement of perceptual-motor skills. Since this was not an important project goal, it is not surprising that more than 50 percent of the respondents indicated only some or little success in this area.

FINDINGS IN MATHEMATICS PROJECTS

The results of interviews with personnel in exemplary mathematics projects are presented below.

Project Goals

Improving pupils' attitudes toward mathematics was identified as the primary project goal by a majority of project teachers and paraprofessionals. Over 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they were often concerned with overcoming the pupils' negative self-concept. Such pupils believed that they were unable to perform well in mathematics. The respondents also emphasized three other project goals: mechanics, process, and application of mathematics skills.

Instructional Groupings

Project teachers and paraprofessionals indicated the extent to which each of five types of instructional pupil groupings were used in their classroom. The groupings included large-group informal, small-group informal, large-group formal, small-group formal, and one-to-one or individual instruction. A large group was defined as having more than ten students.

About 90 percent of the respondents used small-group formal most extensively. Individual, one-to-one grouping, was also used by about 80 percent of the respondents. Large-group formal, the traditional classroom arrangement, was seldom used for project instruction.

Motivational Strategies

Project teachers and paraprofessionals indicated how frequently they used specific motivational strategies in the instruction of their compensatory mathematics pupils. These strategies included: (1) external reinforcement, such as candy or tokens; (2) negative reinforcement, such as marking an X through an incorrect answer or telling a pupil "that's wrong"; (3) verbal praise or positive comments on pupils' papers; (4) instruction geared to a high pupil success factor;[1/] (5) discussion with pupils about past failure in mathematics.

About 90 percent of the respondents extensively used both instruction geared to a high success factor and positive reinforcement to motivate their pupils. Negative reinforcement was the least used motivational strategy.

Instructional Activities

The greatest expenditure of instructional time was on drill. This activity was used often or extensively by about 85 percent of the project teachers and paraprofessionals. Drill in the exemplary projects rarely meant repetitive or monotonous drill; rather, drill concepts were incorporated into a variety of gamelike activities designed to be fun for pupils both in school and at home.

1/ E.g., assigning mathematics problems which are within the ability range of the pupil.

Improving motor abilities, such as setting problems up correctly and keeping columns straight, was also used by about the same percent of the respondents. Other instructional activities used frequently were those geared toward developing listening and reading skills, increasing attention span, and working out written problems.

Instructional Materials

A variety of commercially produced and teacher-made instructional materials was used in project classrooms.

Commercially produced materials.[1/] Nine categories of commercially produced materials were used by project teachers and paraprofessionals. Manipulatives, such as Cuisinaire rods, were found to be the most extensively used. Textbooks and activity kits were used to a somewhat lesser degree. The remaining were all used to some extent.

1/These categories ranked in descending order were: manipulative materials, textbooks, activity kits, programmed instructional materials, games and activity cards, teacher aides and resources, audiovisual aids, skill kits, and management systems.

Teacher-made materials.[2/] Games created by the teachers and paraprofessionals were the most extensively used instructional materials in the exemplary mathematics projects surveyed. Over 85 percent of the respondents produced and used games often or extensively. Slightly more than half the respondents indicated frequent use of teacher-made dittos, puzzles, and charts. Teacher-made filmstrips and slides were rarely used.

Evaluation Procedures

Many types of formative evaluation procedures were used in project classrooms, including: paper and pencil (teacher-made) tests, observation of the use of manipulatives, puzzle solving, programmed and automated instructional devices. The more frequently used procedures—paper and pencil tests and observation of manipulatives—required little basic interpretive skills but rather focused directly on essential mathematics skills. Programmed and automated instructional materials, requiring less teacher or paraprofessional guidance and participation, were used much less than those procedures requiring a greater level of pupil/ teacher interaction (e.g., oral discussion).

In all projects, standardized tests were used for summative evaluation, as required by the selection criteria.

2/These materials ranked in descending order were: games, dittos, charts, puzzles, tapes, transparencies, filmstrips, and slides.

CHAPTER V - COMPARISON WITH NATIONAL SAMPLE

Information concerning the national projects was obtained from a study conducted by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for the U.S. Office of Education (Rubin, Trisman, Wilder, and Yates, 1973).

The questionnaire used to obtain results in the national ETS study contained several sections that were highly relevant to the goals of the exemplary projects study. Certain questions that appeared on the ETS questionnaire were also asked in this study. Portions of the ETS study, therefore, provide a national sample with which to compare the findings from the New York State Exemplary Projects Study.

The ETS study presents data reported by 1,200 compensatory reading project teachers nationwide; this study presents data reported by 88 exemplary reading project teachers and paraprofessionals in New York State.

Other differences between these studies are apparent: data for the national study were collected in spring, 1972, whereas these project data were collected in spring, 1976; the national study selected its sample from projects nominated by State Education Departments, local district staff and others who perceived the projects to be noteworthy while the New York State study reviewed all projects which had previously achieved results which met or exceeded selected levels of statistical significance and then limited the inquiry to only those projects which met the criteria stipulated; New York State data include projects operating in grades 2 through 6, whereas national data represent only grades 2, 4 and 6. Nevertheless, in each study, portions of the total data set with respect to reading projects are similar, and cautious comparisons between the data sets are possible in the areas of project goals, instructional approaches, instructional activities, instructional materials and perceptions of success. It is reasonable to include paraprofessionals as well as teachers in the data from New York State exemplary projects in view of their direct day-to-day involvement with project pupils. It is likely that paraprofessionals were not so widely employed in 1971-72 in the national sample of projects.

While numerous item-by-item comparisons can be made between the two data sets, only the most salient areas of interest are presented in the results which follow.

FINDINGS

Reading teachers responding to the national questionnaire placed substantially more emphasis on all project goals listed than did exemplary project reading teachers and paraprofessionals surveyed in New York State.

Major Goals

Both sample respondents indicated that improving the pupils' self-concept, improving the pupils' attitude toward reading, and developing comprehension skills were most often emphasized as the major or secondary project goals. Specifically, 99 percent of the national respondents and 94 percent of the New York State respondents indicated that improving the pupils' self-concept was a major or secondary goal. One hundred percent of the national respondents felt that the pupils' attitude toward reading was the major area of emphasis while 93 percent of the New York State respondents indicated the same. The development of comprehension skills was rated by 99 percent of the national sample and 88 percent of the New York Sample as a major or secondary project goal.

Marked differences in project emphasis show up in the areas of oral reading, perceptual-motor skills, discrimination skills, vocabulary-language arts, and work-study skills. The most extreme difference is in the area of perceptual-motor skills. Eighty-two percent of the New York State respondents felt this area was of some, little, or no importance in their projects. Conversely, 78 percent of the national respondents felt that perceptual-motor skills were of major or secondary importance. Such differences may be a factor of sampling variations in grade levels between the two studies.

Instructional approaches

One of the most significant differences between the national sample and the New York State subset occurred in the area of instructional approaches used in the projects. While almost all New York State teachers and paraprofessionals reported use of a flexible, eclectic approach in their reading instruction, the national respondents most often used either a more specific linguistic-phonic or a language-experience approach. However, New York State respondents reported greater use of both phonic materials and decoding activities than did the typical national reading teachers. Also, a much smaller percentage of those surveyed nationally reported use of phonics materials extensively.

Instructional Activities

More time was generally spent in decoding activities by respondents in both samples than in all other enumerated activities. Eighty-five percent of the New York teachers and paraprofesionals indicated that they used decoding activities a great deal in their classrooms and 69 percent of the national respondents indicated the same degree of use.

New York State staff more often engaged in activities involving workstudy skills, silent reading, and vocabulary/language arts skills than did the staff in the national sample, although both groups used these activities either some or a great deal of the time.

Instructional Materials

Both studies examined the degree of use of various instructional materials in project classrooms.

Results clearly indicate that typical national compensatory reading teachers and paraprofessionals differ greatly in the extent of their use of various instructional materials. With the notable exception of basal materials, teachers and paraprofessionals in New York were much more likely to use all materials extensively than were typical national compensatory reading teachers. Furthermore respondents from the New York sample indicated a use of a greater variety of instructional materials. Seventy-eight percent of the New York teachers and paraprofessionals and 20 percent of the national teachers made extensive use of phonics materials. This finding, coupled with the finding that 85 percent of the New York respondents spent a great deal of time on decoding activities, suggests that New York reading projects placed more emphasis on decoding letters into sounds that did typical national reading projects.

Specialized equipment (e.g., Controlled Reader or Language Master) was also extensively used more often in the New York projects. While 51 percent of the New York respondents used specialized equipment extensively, only one percent of the national respondents made extensive use of specialized equipment. The majority (66 percent) of the national sample indicated that they made no use of specialized equipment in classroom instruction.

The New York reading project teacher and paraprofessional were also more likely (than the typical national compensatory reading teacher) to use programmed and linguistic materials extensively. New York respondents used these materials significantly more often, supporting the finding that the relationship of letters and sounds was emphasized to a greater extent in the New York projects.

The national respondents were much more likely to use basal readers more extensively than the New York respondents. Only 26 percent of the New York respondents used basal readers either extensively or somewhat as compared with 84 percent of the national respondents. Nevertheless, basal materials were extensively available for use in the New York districts' general reading programs. This finding suggests that New York exemplary projects were serving supplemental rather than "substitute" instructional functions.

Perceptions of Success

Both sample respondents felt very successful in regard to their instruction being geared to improving both pupils' self-concept and pupils' attitude toward reading. Ninety-five percent of all respondents felt they had achieved at least moderate success in these areas of reading instruction.

CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSIONS

From time to time, large scale studies seek nominations for educational practices from professional staff in appropriate disciplines. Unless the selection criteria are carefully controlled such nominations include projects with innovative activities, noteworthy student teacher rapport, unusual processes and other subjectively based elements. The New York study differed in that the compensatory education projects selected were primarily those which had achieved statistically significant results, in terms of learner outcomes, for two or more years.

The objective of the study was to discover, in retrospect, what factors seemed to relate highly to positive results. Hence it must be clearly understood that the projects studied constitute a subset not a sample. As a subset, generalizations should not be extended to a larger population.

It may be inferred from the report that there are many workable ideas presented by teachers which may be used in other districts with the expectation of improving learner outcomes.

The report does not indicate what factors may be used in combination to achieve the most statistically significant results. However the reader is expected to be sufficiently conversant with the district's characteristics to know what factors may be readily accepted in the appropriate district or building.

While the report presents a discussion of the combined findings of all the projects studies, an abstract of each project may be obtained from the Department's Bureau of School and Categorical Programs Evaluation.

The projects studied and many other descriptions of exemplary projects are on file with the Department's Unit for Educational Program System for Information Services (EPSIS).

While the State administers many compensatory education programs, the projects selected for study were drawn from the ESEA, Title I program or the Urban Education Program.